

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

A Growing Rift in China

*Excerpts for a Memorandum by the Third Secretary of the Embassy in China (John Service),
Temporarily on duty in Washington, D.C., January 23, 1943*

KUOMINTANG-COMMUNIST SITUATION

An outstanding impression gained during the past eighteen months spent in Chungking and in travel through Southwest and Northwest China is that the most careful study should be given to the internal political situation in China, particularly the growing rift between the Kuomintang and the Communists...

...In Kuomintang-controlled China the countering of Communism is a growing preoccupation of propaganda, of both military and civilian political indoctrination, and of secret police and gendarmerie activity. There is not only a rigorous suppression of anything coming under the ever widening definition of "Communism" but there appears to be a movement away from even the outward forms of democracy in government. It is now no longer wondered whether civil war can be avoided, but rather whether it can be delayed at least until after a victory over Japan.

...Another way of making our interest in the situation known to the Kuomintang would be to send American representatives to visit the Communist area. I have not heard this proposed by the Communists themselves. But there is no doubt that they would welcome such action.

This visit would have the great additional advantage of providing us with comprehensive and reliable information regarding the Communist side of the situation. For instance we might be able to have better answers to some of the following pertinent questions: How faithfully have the Communists carried out their United Front promises? What is the form of their local government? How "Communistic" is it? Does it show any democratic character or possibilities? Has it won any support of the people? How does it compare with conditions of government in Kuomintang China? How does the Communist treatment of the people in such matters as taxation, grain requisition, military service and forced labor compare with that in the Kuomintang territory? What is the military and economic strength of the Communists and what is their probable value to the Allied cause? How have they dealt with problems such as inflation, price control, development of economic resources for carrying on the war, and trading with the enemy? Have the people in the guerrilla area been

mobilized and aroused to the degree necessary to support real guerrilla warfare? ...

Without such knowledge, it is difficult to appraise conflicting reports and reach a considered judgment. Due to the Kuomintang blockade, information regarding conditions in the Communist area is at present not available. Such information as we do have is several years out of date, and has limitations as to scope and probable reliability. Carlson [Marine Major Evans Carlson] was primarily a military man and had a limited knowledge of the Chinese language. Most of the journalists who have been able to visit the Communist area appear to have a bias favorable to the Communists. They also suffered from language limitations and were unable to remain in the area for an extended period.

I suggest that the American representatives best suited to visit the Communist area are Foreign Service Officers of the China language service. One or two men might be sent. They should combine moderately long term residence at Yenan or its vicinity with fairly extensive travel in the guerrilla area. It is important that they not be required to base a report on a brief visit during which they would be under the influence of official guides, but that they should have a sufficient time to become familiar with conditions and make personal day today observations.

There is mail and telegraphic communication between Yenan and Chungking, and similar communication between various parts of the Communist area. The officers would therefore not be out of touch with the Embassy and could, if it is thought desirable, make periodic reports." ■

Source

United States Department of State, *United States Department of State/Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, China, 1943*, pp. 193-199

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